

## Revisiting the Thai Scale: Two New Templates for Targeting & Project Performance Assessment <sup>1</sup>

Dr. Kenneth F. Smith, PMP

A couple of years ago, I wrote a detailed article for PMWJ readers describing the origins and concept of the ‘**Thai Scale**’ technique<sup>2</sup> for targeting project indicator variables *based on their standard deviations*, together with a series of templates for subsequent performance monitoring & assessment from various viewpoints.

This article summarizes the Thai Scale’s essential elements,<sup>3</sup> and unveils **two new templates** to facilitate performance assessment.

To make the standard deviation<sup>4</sup> concept palatable to all stakeholders, the normal probability distribution scale is equated to the five-banded Thai national flag (*with its double-wide central band*). The width of the bands for establishing subjective indicator performance standards of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for internal organizational management, project delivery and/or customer service variables – *as well as quantitative schedule & budget implementation targets* -- are thus **proportional to the range of target magnitudes**. This also enables **actual** performance to be rated **compared to either the target, the baseline or both** - as indicated in Figure 1 on the following page.

While still amenable to subjective ordinal ranking for targeting during planning as well as after-the-fact performance assessment -- *preferably with quantitative data* -- **the Thai scale is best employed statistically – i.e. with probabilities -- that can be readily computed, given baseline amounts, targets and actuals.**

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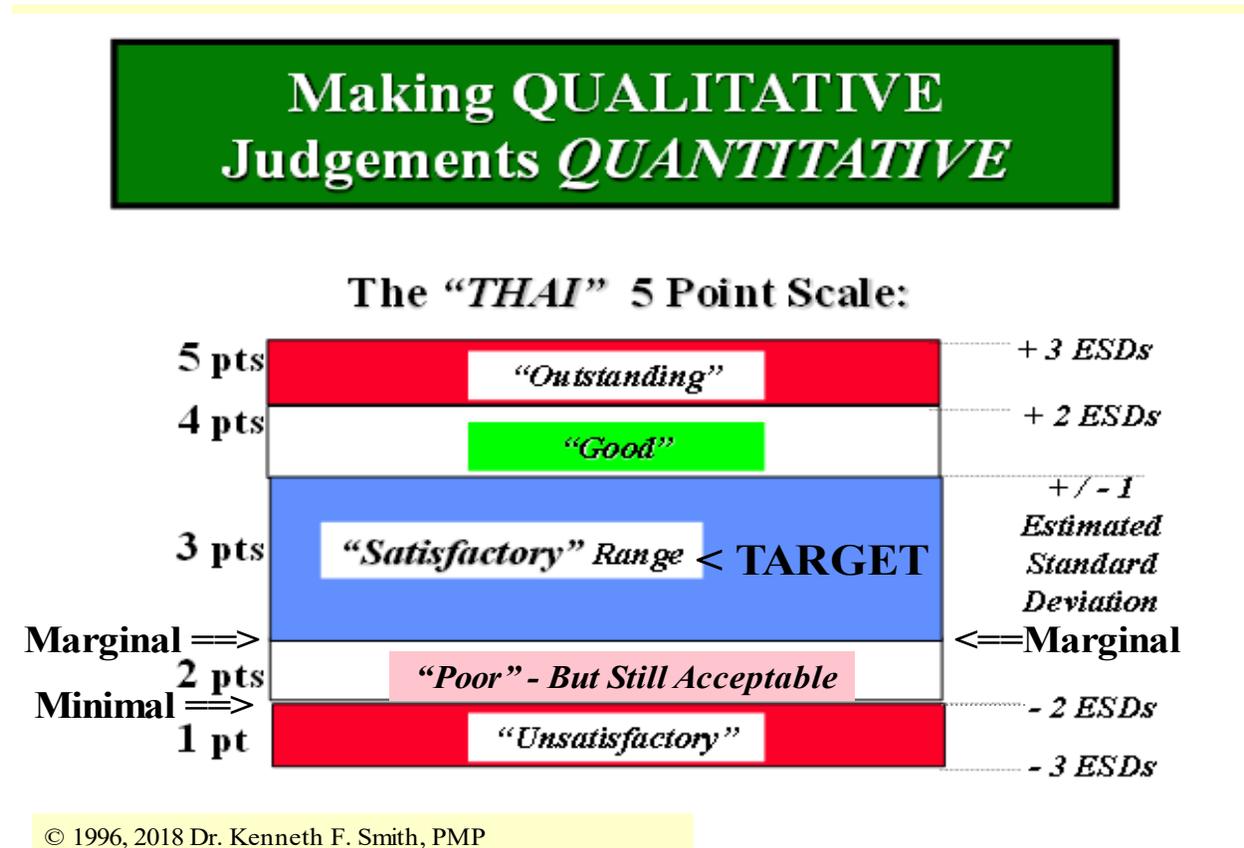
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<sup>2</sup> Smith, K. F. (2021). Assessing Program & Project Performance with the ‘THAI-SCALE’ Technique & Template, *PM World Journal*, Vol. X, Issue XII, December.

<sup>3</sup> Devised with my principal Thai Auditor General counterparts: Tanom & Karanee

<sup>4</sup> The standard deviation normal distribution curve is the basis for statistical probability assessment. [Some instructors use the range and distribution of their students test results to grade them ‘*on the curve*’ with the standard deviation.] Way back in the 1950’s & 60’s, the Program Evaluation & Review Technique (PERT) used a ‘*quick & easy*’ estimated standard deviation (ESD) in conjunction with the Critical Path Method (CPM) where **One ESD = (Pessimistic – Optimistic)/6** to estimate activity duration probabilities as well as to subsequently assess performance. **We also used the ESD to estimate organizational management, program & project performance, as described herein.**

Figure 1



Applying this concept, **reasonable targets can initially be established by extrapolation** based on past trends or growth rates -- *instead of ceiling estimates*. [For instance, the ***larger the Target over the Baseline***, the ***harder it will be to achieve Statistically-Significant results*** – i.e. Outstanding (or Unsatisfactory) – and the greater the probability that performance will be within the wider Satisfactory range.]

**After-the-fact-evaluation can also determine whether targets were unrealistically high, or unnecessarily low;** assuming either a linear or curvilinear relationship.

**If no target was established,** performance can still be evaluated in terms of the extent of ***improvement over the baseline***.

Even without a baseline, performance can be rated as ***percentage variance from a quantitative target***.

The two new templates to facilitate project performance analysis are depicted in Figures 2 & 3 on the following page.

Figure 2

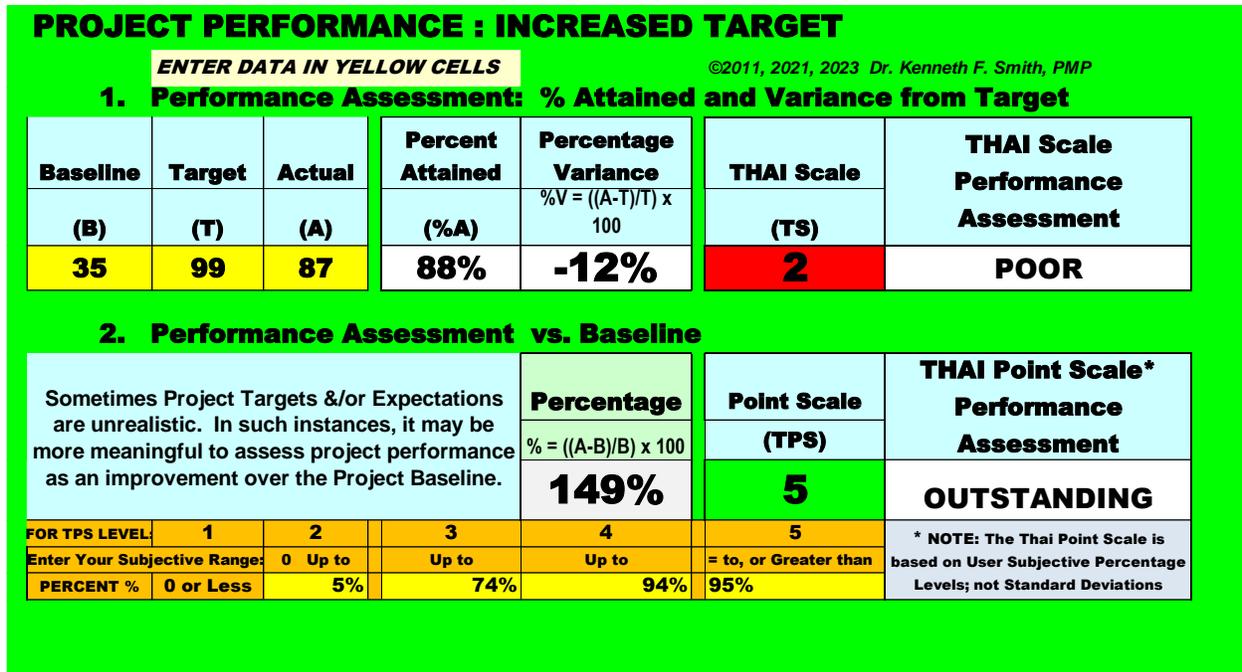
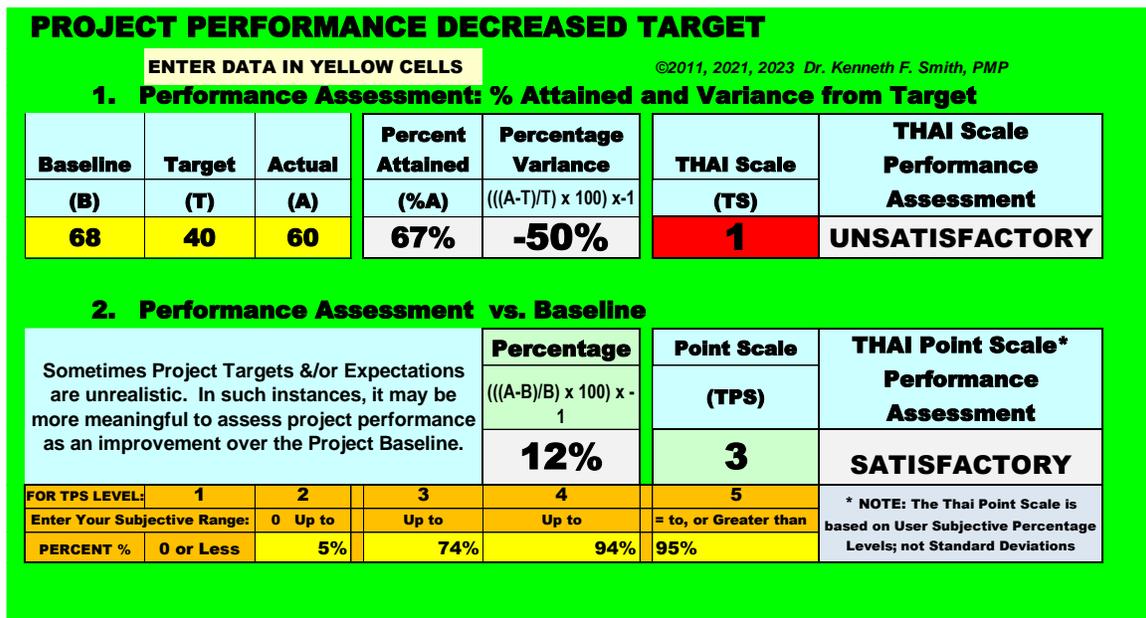


Figure 3



As usual, copies of these -- and over 150 other PM-related -- templates can be obtained from me for free on proof of purchase of my book Project Management PRAXIS (available from Amazon).

## About the Author



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Initially a US Civil Service Management Intern, then a management analyst & systems specialist with the US Defense Department, Ken subsequently had a career as a senior foreign service officer -- management & evaluation specialist, project manager, and in-house facilitator/trainer -- with the US Agency for International Development (USAID). Ken assisted host country governments in many countries to plan, monitor and evaluate projects in various technical sectors; working ‘hands-on’ with their officers as well as other USAID personnel, contractors and NGOs. Intermittently, he was also a team leader &/or team member to conduct project, program & and country-level portfolio analyses and evaluations.

Concurrently, Ken had an active dual career as Air Force ready-reservist in Asia (Japan, Korea, Vietnam, Indonesia, Philippines) as well as the Washington D.C. area; was Chairman of a Congressional Services Academy Advisory Board (SAAB); and had additional duties as an Air Force Academy Liaison Officer. He retired as a ‘bird’ colonel. After retirement from USAID, Ken was a project management consultant for ADB, the World Bank, UNDP and USAID.

He earned his DPA (Doctor of Public Administration) from the George Mason University (GMU) in Virginia, his MS from Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT Systems Analysis Fellow, Center for Advanced Engineering Study), and BA & MA degrees in Government & International Relations from the University of Connecticut (UCONN). A long-time member of the Project Management Institute (PMI) and IPMA-USA, Ken is a Certified Project Management Professional (PMP®) and a member of the PMI®-Honolulu and Philippines Chapters.

Ken’s book -- **Project Management PRAXIS** (available from Amazon) -- includes many innovative project management tools & techniques; and describes a “**Toolkit**” of related templates available directly from him at [kenfsmith@aol.com](mailto:kenfsmith@aol.com) on proof of purchase of PRAXIS.

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